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AND
THE CANADIAN NORTH WEST.

VALUABLE INFORMATION FOR INTENDING SETTLERS.

REPORT OF

LT.-COL. BARWIS,

Arthabaskaville, Quebec, and a delegation of practical
farmers from the district of Arthabaska, Province of
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THOS. BARWIS, Lt.-Col., late commanding 55th Battalion.

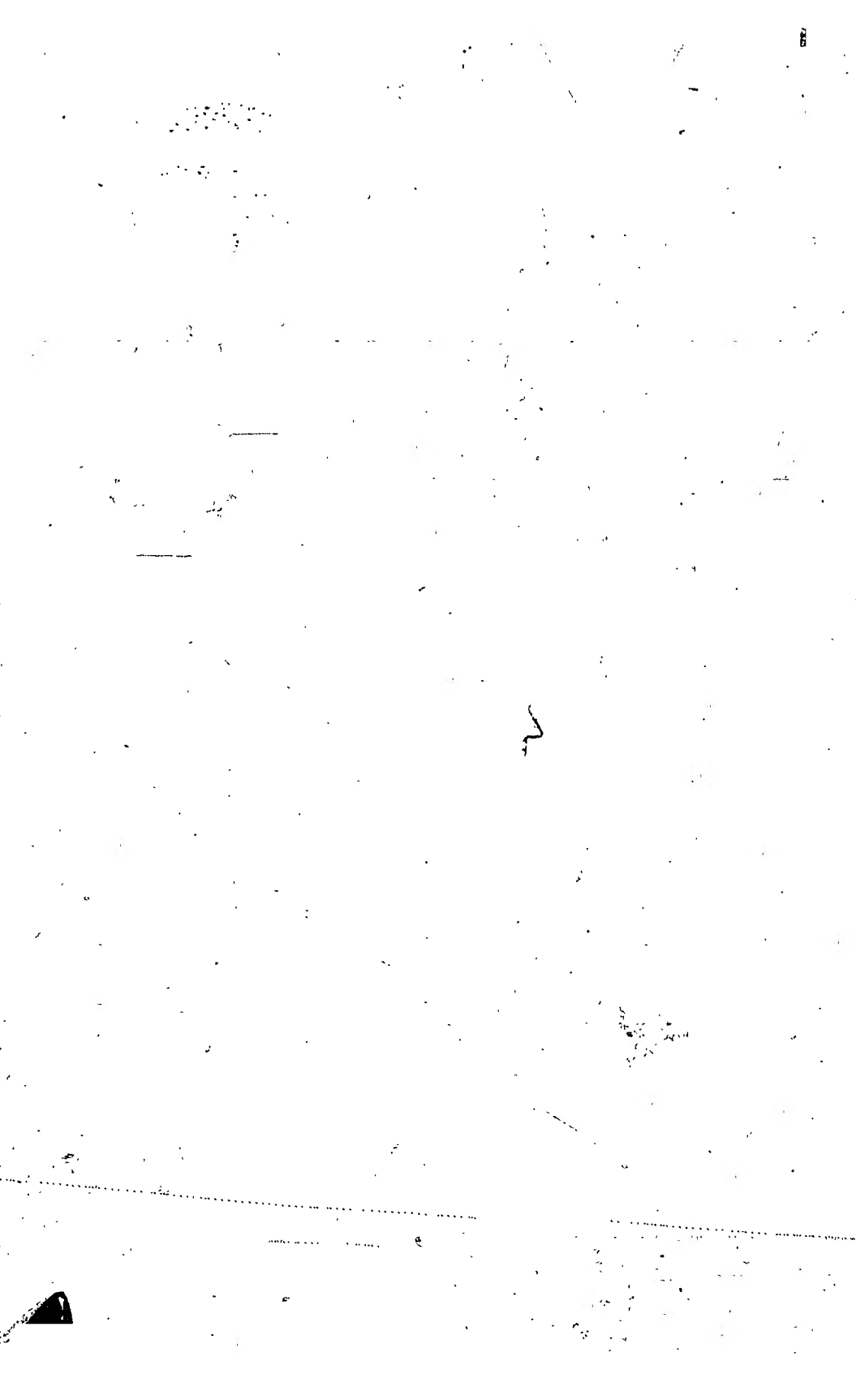
W. H. FELTON, Esquire, Barrister, of Arthabaskaville.

THOMAS K. ANDREWS, of Inverness, Farmer, County Megantic.

EDWIN A. GOFF, of Leeds, Farmer, County Megantic.

RODERICK MUNROE MCKENZIE, of West Wickham, Farmer, County of Drummond.







Introduction.

As far back as 1860, while I was Mayor of the Township of Ireland, County of Megantic, Province of Quebec, and commanding the Megantic Rifles, I was pained to see the steady exodus of our young people to the United States as soon as they were able to work, and that hardly any of them came back to settle.

About that time I conceived the idea of turning the tide of immigration towards our Western Territories. I had read Sir George Simpson's and several Imperial Officers' reports on that country, and had become convinced that it was the land to establish a colony of the English-speaking people of our country. I became so much identified with it that I have ever since been looked upon as their leader by those who desired to leave the country. Subsequently, when Colonel commanding the 55th Megantic Highland Light Infantry, which I had raised and commanded for over twenty years, the question of applying for a grant of land from the Government to form a colony was frequently mooted to me by my officers and men till, in 1869, it culminated in letters to the Government stating the fact that the people were leaving for the United States, and it would be desirable to save those young people to our own country, and asking that a grant of land be given them in the North-West Territories.

This letter was very favourably received by the Government, but subsequent events in the North-West prevented the object being carried out. Again, in 1875, a petition to the same effect was sent to the Government, but nothing was done about it.

In 1883 the English-speaking people of Megantic again urged me to petition the Government, and backed up their petition for land grants with over two hundred signatures.

Over two thousand young men who had served under me in the 55th were scattered all over the United States, the great majority of whom could not be induced to take the necessary oath of allegiance to that country to enable them to take lands, the oath being most repugnant to them, as it required them to swear that they should "entirely renounce and abjure" for ever all allegiance to any foreign power, and particularly to *Queen Victoria* of Great Britain and Ireland."

Now, those men who had taken the oath of allegiance to our Queen as well as against the dismemberment of the British Empire, cannot be induced to take lands and settle in the States, neither will they settle in the County of Megantic, as most of the available land for settlement surrounding their parents' homes has been taken up.

Therefore, at the earnest request of the leading people of the County of Megantic, I memorialized the Dominion Government on the subject and received information, instructions, and orders to the different Land Agents in the North-West to give all the assistance and information to facilitate us in the selection of homesteads.

On the strength of this I notified those interested to choose delegates (Farmers) to proceed with me to the Canadian North-West to view the land and to report thereon.

ARTHABASKAVILLE, April, 1885.

THOS. BARWIS,
Lt.-Col.

REPORT.



On the seventh of August last, W. H. Felton, Esquire, Barrister, of Arthabaskaville, who had been working with me for over ten years for the same object; a delegation of Farmers from the district of Arthabaska, and I left on our journey, first to Owen Sound, thence by Lake Huron and Lake Superior in the magnificent steamships of the Canadian Pacific Railway Co., and arrived at Winnipeg on the 13th. Here we were joined by Mr. Roderick Munro McKenzie, a delegate chosen by the English-speaking people of the County of Drummond, who had left some time before for Morrison, in the State of Iowa, where he intended to settle unless he found the land where we were going proved more favorable.

I was detained one day at Winnipeg and one day at Regina. During that time Mr. Goff, delegate from the Township of Leeds, and Mr. Andrews, delegate from the Townships of Inverness and Ireland in Megantic, and Mr. McKenzie, visited several localities between Winnipeg and Regina to see farmers from their counties who had been settled for some time in the North-West, and to take notes of all the information they could get from them. They rejoined me three days after and reported that the land they saw under cultivation was very good with good crops.

We left Regina on the 16th and arrived at Calgary on the 17th.

The immense prairie traversed by the Canadian Pacific between Winnipeg and Calgary, 838 miles, has been often described before.

It appeared to me like the middle of the ocean in a calm after a storm; but as our mission was agricultural we viewed the land in that light all the way out while we had daylight, and with the exception of a few miles opposite the great sand hills, the very poorest soil on the whole route we considered better than the very best in our Province that we had seen.

We got out almost at every station and examined the growth of the grain that had dropped in the railway ditches, in the subsoil and the weeds, and in the much talked of Alkali lands. We found in the broken ground of the railway lambs-quarter growing to a size and rankness which could never be seen in the richest garden or barn yard in our Eastern Townships, besides wheat, oats and barley, with 30 to 40 stools to the seed. We also carefully examined the Canadian Pacific Experimental Farms, and there, on those very alkali lands, with the short, yellow, dry looking grass all round, the grain on a sod only three inches thick stood over four feet high, with plump, well-filled heads, just beginning to turn.

On the 19th of August, with two double waggons, tents, &c., we started on a tour of exploration to the south of Calgary, accompanied by my son James Barwis as guide. My son has been a resident of the North-West Territories for ten years, the most of which has been passed at Calgary in the employ of I. J. Baker & Co. as Indian trader, during which time he has acquired the Blackfoot, Cree and Sarcee languages. He has travelled all over that part of the country from the Cypress Hills to the Rockies, and from the International Boundary to the North Saskatchewan, and is well known to all the old settlers. Upon being introduced by him as one looking over the country for the purpose of choosing lands for settlers, I had no trouble in getting all the information possible from these old settlers. They are chiefly men who have traversed the whole of the western continent from the Rio Grande to the Peace River, as well as the Pacific Slopes. These people are very reticent and look upon every stranger with suspicion until they are assured that he is an intending settler. By their advice, and with my son's knowledge of the country, we visited that part of Alberta which from their experience was the very best part of our North-West.

We first visited Mr. Sam Livingston's farm, five miles south of Calgary. The grain was superior to anything we had seen on our way out. We bored into the soil on the top of the high bench in a field of oats and found three feet of the richest black mould on top of rich heavy clay loam. He showed us timothy that had been scratched in on the prairie grass on the 8th June. It appeared to have taken well, and some of it was in head.

Mr. Livingston informed us that he had been sixteen years in the country, had always raised good crops, and the much talked of summer frosts had never touched his or any of the farms in that vicinity.

We next proceeded to Mr. John Glen at Fish Creek, on the McLeod trail. His grain was certainly a sight to look at. He boasted that there was nothing in the world to beat it, and we fully agreed with him. He showed us two stacks of last year's grain, one of wheat and the other of oats. We could see that they had ripened perfectly. The wheat was shorter in the head than this year's, but plump, hard and clear as amber. As we remained till after the harvest we were satisfied that there had been no summer frosts these two years.

We then left the McLeod trail and turned to the left to the old Government supply farm where we saw some very fine grain and soil; in fact, during the several days we travelled, guided by my son, in every direction without regard to trails, wherever we saw a stack or settler's hut in the distance, we stopped to examine his crops and get information. We found the grain the same, in spite of very poor cultivation, most of it sown on the sod, and too thin, which on such rich soil delayed the ripening. We found the features of the country and the character of the soil the same everywhere between Calgary and High River, viz., high bench prairie, top covered with black mould from one to

three feet over a rich clay loam. The intervals, where the numerous streams run, have no black mould on top; there you find nothing but clay loam; but the crops are equally as fine as on the top of the high benches.

All the streams are as clear as possible, and very cold, owing to the melting snows from the Rockies.

There could not possibly be a finer country for dairy and cheese making. For mixed farming we were satisfied it was the best, could be seen, such heavy crops of all sorts of grain can be raised at such little expense when carried on by a farmer and his family. The great return of grain and vegetables would give feed for the raising of large stocks of horses, cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry, more especially as it is not necessary to winter-feed stock, except now and again in the case of weak or sickly ones, and cows calving in the spring.

In the September number of Harper's new monthly, the "Wheat Fields of Columbia," by Elfnest Ingersoll, page 502, referring to the district near Wala Wala, where the Snake River falls into the Columbia River, about six degrees due south of where the C. P. R. crosses the Selkirk range in British Columbia, we read the following:—"The first settlers took the bottom lands " because they held their greenness longest and were easiest of cultivation. " * * * Before long, however, adventurous spirits, finding that irrigation " was unnecessary, made experiments in planting upon the tops of the hills " whose yellow backs lay hot under the sun between the river copes and " the mountain woods. The tuffaceous soil turned up by the plough was " dark and rich, and the yield outranked the best acres along the creek side."

— This description agrees with what we saw in Alberta, near Calgary, this summer.

— The clouds from the Pacific Ocean being robbed of their moisture while crossing the several ranges of mountains reach the rolling lands of Alberta warm and dry, and there is not snow enough in the winter to prevent cattle from grazing.

Besides the advantage in mixed farming, the settler will be in a country abounding in coal; and as for lumber, we went out to the end of the C. P. R. track past the summit, and remained a couple of days. The timber we saw was very dense, of somewhat smaller growth than we have in the Province of Quebec, consisting of spruce, tamarac and a species of pine. A glance at a good map will show that there is an inexhaustible supply. We subsequently travelled from the southern branch of High River to the northern extremity of the Bow River, where it taps the head waters of the North Saskatchewan and the Red Deer River, an extent of 150 miles by about 100 miles in breadth. These rivers have numerous tributaries branching in every direction through the Rockies, whose slopes to a great height and the valleys between are heavily covered with timber.

The nearest, and I may say the only, feasible way to reach the head waters of those rivers is by the Canadian Pacific Railway, which follows the Bow River for a hundred miles in the Rockies, to where it turns north near the summit; its source is forty or fifty miles further north and in its course to the south it runs near to and parallel with the North Saskatchewan and Red Deer Rivers, so that the communications for lumbering could be carried on from that point better than any other.

Therefore the establishment near Calgary (which would be the centre of supplies) of a settlement of our people, accustomed to lumbering, would be an advantage to the farming as well as the lumbering interests, would furnish material to build up the hundreds of towns that are soon to spring up on the borders of those large rivers, as well as manufacture lumber to be sent east along the line of railway.

We have seen the great North-West viewed through eyes scientific, geological, military; by civil engineers, surveyors, colonization societies, farmer delegates from England, and by resident farmers, but have as yet seen no report of that country from such people as our delegates, consisting of practical farmers and lumbermen, chosen by a large community of farmers and lumbermen to carefully view the country and to report on the best and most favorable locality for settlement.

This we have done, and have made our selection as above, intending to settle there ourselves with our people.

After five weeks travelling in that country we have come to the following conclusion:—That it will be settled up from Winnipeg westward and from Calgary eastward, and clustering round the principal towns and settlements on the way out. One portion we considered very attractive for immediate settlement is that lying between the Cypress Hills and the C. P. R. It is better watered and timbered on the hills than any we saw on the way out and is a very beautiful section of the country; the soil also appears very rich. Judging other intending settlers by ourselves, we do not think that these immense plains that we crossed on the way will be settled till the more favorable places are taken up, *although the land is all good*, but it will come in its time. On looking at a good map of that Territory one can see how favored the district of Alberta is, with its thirty millions of acres of the best of soil, its beautiful scenery; its high benches are like a mountainous region with the upper half cut off, and the glorious Rockies ever in sight in the distance, the great number of clear streams traversing it in every direction, its hundreds of lakes, its proximity to the heavily timbered Rocky Mountains, its coal and favorable winters for stock, with Calgary for its great centre on the Canadian Pacific Railway, it will have a market for all its produce either to the east or to the future mining and lumbering centres of British Columbia, and the Pacific seaboard.

I quite agree with the following from the Dominion of Canada Guide Book, 1884, page 109 :

"Agriculturists in search of land, and specially those going to the North-West, should be very careful how they receive the glowing representations which are made to them by agents of land companies who will waylay them at many points on their journey, and particularly if the route taken should happen to be through some of the Western States. An immigrant bound for Manitoba should persevere, in spite of all representations or misrepresentations, in going to see for himself."

A couple of years ago several farmers from the County of Megantic sold out and went to Manitoba to settle and came back disgusted with the country owing to the deceptions of land agents or persons who represented themselves as such. We had to run the gauntlet on our way out, but took note of what we heard and saw, and judged for ourselves, and hence the advantage in going out in large communities to commence settlement after a place has been chosen, as we have done, and giving to others that follow the same advantage of settlement, together with the information and assistance from those who had preceded them, and which these Township men of old Canada are so well accustomed to and know so well how to give.

The Rev. James MacGregor, D.D., one of the party who accompanied the Marquis of Lorne in 1881, remarks :—

"Speaking of the section of country where the cattle ranches are situated, on the third prairie steppe :

"The whole of this region may be said to be more or less under the beneficent influence of the warm winter winds known as the 'Chinooks,' whose true physical explanation has not yet been accurately ascertained, but of whose extraordinary effects in tempering the cold of winter there can be no manner of doubt. It is owing to these winds that snow never lies to any depth, and as a consequence cattle and horses find food and shelter for themselves all the winter through. The result is that ranching or stock raising on a colossal scale has already begun."

* * * * *

"Of the fertility of the soil throughout most of this region we had the amplest proof. It is a pitch-black sandy loam, very easy to work. Near the northern extremity of the region on the Indian supply farm, close by Calgary, we saw for the first time ploughing on the prairie. A pair of horses and a yoke of oxen were each ploughing a mile-long furrow on rich haugh land, a sight which set me thinking about our farmers at home. The virgin soil had been broken in spring, and they were turning it over for fall sowing. Labor was scarce, poor and dear. They were roughly stacking the barley like hay, and the oats were being reaped; the crops of all kinds were in splendid condition. On a farm close by, where the oat crop was a wonder to behold, and where the oats were standing strong in the stem, and 41 inches high, we had the curiosity to count the produce from one self-sown grain of oats, and found them to be 2,691 grains. At another Indian supply farm, at the southern extremity of the region, we counted the return from single grains of oats, and found them to be three times that amount, with as many as forty-five stalks to the stool, and each stalk like a reed; while from one

wheat grain there were eighty-five stalks to the stool, and fifty grains on the average to the stalk, or a return of 4,250. While there can be no doubt whatever that in the region under review there is an ample supply of fertile land, it is only fair to state that there was some conflict of opinion as to its suitability for agriculture, the one serious objection being the occasional occurrence of early frosts. On the other hand, there was a pretty general consensus of opinion that this difficulty would be got over by the practice which is beginning to prevail of fall sowing, which insures that the seed, which the severe frost does not in the least injure, comes away with the first breath of spring."

We therefore made it a point to enquire into the truth of this statement as to summer frosts, as the land agents that we met on our journey out in praising their own lands invariably ran down every other locality, and the summer frosts was one of the drawbacks they mentioned in speaking of Alberta; on the other hand all the settlers as well as the townspeople were positive in stating that there had never been any injury by frost to their knowledge, and for further proof we refer to the following extracts and letters to be found in the Calgary District Agricultural Society pamphlet 1884, published by the Dominion Agricultural Department:

"I settled in this place in July, 1875, and have been farming ever since. As regards summer frost, never experienced them, or found out that they existed.

* * * * *

"I have never failed in raising a good crop of wheat, oats, barley and vegetables of all descriptions during each of the successive years, and have also raised tomatoes and cucumbers every year in the open air. Of wheat I have averaged 37 bushels; oats 57 bushels; barley 7½ bushels to the acre; and have some this year not behind that standard. Average yield of potatoes, on eight acres last year, was 225 bushels to the acre.

"Industriously inclined people can get along comfortably with about \$1,000 capital to start with, but still more would be better.

"I like the climate better than any I have found between the Atlantic and Pacific, the Rio Grande and Peace River, over all of which territory I have travelled. There is everything in the country which a settler can desire.

"There are people who desire to run the country down, who say we have no market for produce here: those who have to buy say we have a good one and at good prices; those who have anything to sell always manage to get the money for it at a good round figure.

"There are the mountains close by with large timber and mineral resources; these interests have to draw their supplies either from Calgary or further east, and they will naturally buy here to save extra railway freight. Winnipeg people say we shall have to send our surplus there; but when we have any we shall send it to the Pacific, which is 230 miles nearer to us than Winnipeg.

"Fish Creek, Sept. 4, 1884.

JOHN GLENN."

"I came from British Columbia to Alberta over two years ago, and formerly lived in Ontario. I have been engaged in mixed farming for two years on a ranch between Fish and Pine Creeks, near Calgary. I have

during that time raised splendid grain and root crops. and there have been grown in my vicinity as good as I ever saw anywhere. The land in this district is a deep black loam, with clay subsoil, and well adapted for agricultural purposes; and there are large tracts of it yet unoccupied. Water is easily accessible anywhere, either in rivers, creeks or springs, and contains no alkali. I consider the advantage I possess in having good water for my stock is a great source of wealth to me. The country is simply unrivalled for stock raising. I consider it pays best to engage in mixed farming. I have not suffered from the much talked of summer frosts, nor do I think they will be any impediment to successful raising of cereals and roots.

"September 4, 1884.

"M. McINNIS, Farmer,
Pine Creek, Alberta."

The following from A. Carney, Esquire, the President of the Calgary District Agricultural Society, will be found on the last page of the pamphlet:

"I came to this country in April, 1882, and I have read the letters from the other settlers, inserted in this pamphlet, all of which I can vouch for. Last year I wintered eighteen cows, and milked them twice a day up till February 20th, after which time I milked them once per day till the 20th of March, without feeding them one pound of fodder or sheltering them at all, the only food which they received being what they procured from the prairie. At the end of March I sold one of these cows for beef to Mr. A. C. Sparrow, butcher (formerly of Ottawa), for \$75. After having had experience in the eastern provinces, I have no hesitation in stating that Alberta presents advantages to farmers that do not exist in any of them. I have seen better crops grown in Alberta on the sod and with the primitive modes of agriculture than I ever saw either in Ontario or Quebec, unless on the most highly cultivated farms in the Ottawa Valley. Scarcely any farmer has ever put a roller on his land, and a seeder, till the present season, was almost unknown.

"Calgary, Alberta, Sept. 5th, 1884.

A. CARNEY."

And this last out of the same book speaks for itself:

TRUE TO THE LETTER.

"We have pleasure in stating that we are personally acquainted with the men whose names figure in this pamphlet, and know that their testimony is perfectly reliable, having visited their farms and a goodly portion of the district. We have become delighted with the country, scenery, fertile lands, rich natural grasses, abundance of clear health-giving waters, plentiful supply of timber and coal, and a climate not excelled in any other part of the Dominion.

"We state with the confidence of truth, that the farmer who is paying high rents for lands in the east, or who owns a farm, but has sons for whom he is anxious to provide, and young men with good 'back-bone,' who are desirous to begin life for themselves—cannot do better than come to the peerless province of Alberta.

"In short, let such give it a fair trial, and they will find it is just the place for a HOME, and a HOME of a place.

"J. DYKE,
Methodist Minister."

"Calgary, Alberta, Sept. 5, 1884.

I call the following out of the report of the visit of the British Association to the North-West from Sir Richard Temple's address delivered at Winnipeg 16th September, 1884, page 51:

"Sons of gentlemen who found every profession at home overstocked, who could not enter the army in the face of the competitive examinations, or who could not succeed at the bar, or in the church, and who found the counting-houses and banking establishments all filled with clerks, are already thinking they could better their mark by taking to cattle-ranching. I would far sooner see my son a farmer, active on horseback, making a little money and becoming independent before he was thirty years of age, than sitting still in a lawyer's office at home. I have made the acquaintance of several young men well educated and well bred, working away on cattle ranches, healthy, blooming and hearty as young Englishmen ought to be, and who have lost none of their good English manner, or good original culture. Even several men high up in the professions at home are investing their capital in these ranches."

* * * * *

"Now it is probable that public attention is so much turned to the Northwestern Provinces that there will be an ever-increasing stream of immigrants; but I doubt if they will be suited to agriculture. Although they may not understand farming, yet they may have stout hearts and strong hands, and an aptitude for learning, if you only make provision for teaching them."

There are thousands of country gentlemen's sons in England more than are required to fill up the positions they formerly had control of, who, if they could be induced to settle in that part of the North-West with a small capital to begin with, would in a very few years be independent.

I met several while at Calgary this summer, and one in particular on my return who was on his way home intending to come back in the spring with others and take up land. I think it is the right thing for them to do, for I do not agree with Sir Richard as to their taking to cattle ranching. By their taking land at once they would soon become independent; if they went on a cattle ranche they would have to pay a premium and give several years of service for nothing, and probably all they would know at its expiration would be how to ride a *bucketing horse*. So much loss of time and money besides. It is important to take up land as soon as possible, to be as near the main centres and by settling near such, as our townspeople are, to learn all that would be required to become a successful farmer; and as these young men are all the best of horsemen that country would be congenial to them as so much is done in the saddle.

At page 18 in the Dominion of Canada Guide Book, 1884, we find the following:

"It may now be stated with confidence that the collection of cattle at the great stock-breeding farms of Canada is among the most valuable in the world. It is made up of the very best blood of the bovine aristocracy of England. Not many years ago there were no pure herds in the country,

except the small species of cow in the French part of Lower Canada, which were brought in chiefly from Bretagne, and possess the milking characteristics of the Alderneys. To-day, there are in Canada many herds of the best English breeds, with a pure and unbroken record extending back many generations."

I have possessed a great number of what is called the small Canadian cow of the Province of Quebec during my twenty-five years residence in the County of Megantic. They were brought up there by the French-Canadian settlers from the parishes in the St. Lawrence. The rich pastures of the Townships made so great an improvement in them that the yearlings of the same breed were as large as their progenitors; and, as to their milking qualities, I prefer them to any other as to quantity and richness.

On one of the several voyages I made home to England I resided for six months in the Island of Gournsey and have no hesitation in saying that these afore-mentioned Canadian cows are one and the same breed as those in the Channel Islands for which such fancy prices are given here. I would therefore advise all intending settlers to take out with them as many as they can; they can be had at a very low rate in any of the French parishes, and no danger of having too many of them for they can be sold out there with a very large profit, for there the price of cows is from \$70 to \$100. It is true they are larger, but a cow is a cow out there, and there are plenty of the best grade bulls to be had should any one wish to improve his stock; besides, the Canadian cow is very hardy and would stand the winters out better than any other. She is docile and easily milked, which cannot be said of the ranche cattle we saw that had to be roped and tied to a stake to milk. I would also say bring out the best breeds of pigs and poultry, and good Percheron stallions; they can be had in the Eastern Townships at from \$200 to \$500. Take your bedding, clothing, crockery and tinware; furniture can be had at Calgary cheaper than you can take it out. Agricultural implements suitable to that country can be had from the "Ayr American Plough Company, Ayr, Ont." They have a siding on the C. P. R. A number of settlers clubbing together could get them that way much cheaper than at Calgary, but a farmer purchasing for himself alone would do as well at the latter place where all farm implements are to be had at fairly reasonable prices.

